



M E D I A R E L E A S E

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATE FIRE MARSHAL, LOCAL FIRE OFFICIALS TEAM UP AGAINST HIGH FIRE DEATH RATE

TENNESSEE SECOND IN THE NATION FOR FIRE DEATHS

NASHVILLE – Commissioner of Commerce and Insurance Paula Flowers has created a Fire Mortality Prevention Task Force to help reduce the high rate of fire-related fatalities in Tennessee.

According to the National Fire Prevention Association, Tennessee ranks second in the U.S. in its fire death rate. In 2001, there were 122 fire deaths in Tennessee. Tennessee's rate of fire deaths is twice the national average. The NFPA, noting that nine of the top ten fire death states are in the Southeast, has suggested that the factors include poverty, low education levels and the high incidence of smoking.

“This is a shameful statistic, as far as I’m concerned, and we’re looking at each of these deaths to determine what factors are responsible for Tennessee’s death rate being so high,” said Flowers. “This is a public safety issue, and I’m convinced that there are things we can do to bring our rate down.”

Flowers, who is also Tennessee’s Fire Marshal, has appointed a 22-member task force that includes veteran firefighters, codes officials, insurance professionals, and state officials, and has challenged the group to take a comprehensive approach to Tennessee’s fire death problem.

“We may find we need to do better codes enforcement, we may find we need to improve electrical inspections, we may find we need to get more smoke detectors in some communities and do more fire prevention education,” Flowers said. “We may find we need stronger laws in this state. We’re going to do whatever it takes.”

The Task Force is launching a major statewide public awareness campaign in October, which is being shaped by the group’s research.

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The Task Force members are:

State Sen. Jim Bryson of Brentwood,
Kristin Coile, Asst. to the Commissioner, TDCI
Stuart Crine, Director of the Fire Service and Codes Enforcement Academy,
Paula Flowers, Commissioner of Commerce and Insurance
Randy Fox, TN Public Fire and Life Safety Educators Association
Dick Garner, Director, Tennessee Bomb and Arson Division
Revida Glover, Claims Administrator, Farm Bureau
Bonita Hamm, Director, Tennessee Manufactured Housing Association
Mike Hermann, Director, Safe and Drug Free Schools Program
Sonny Hutchens, President, Tennessee Building Officials Association
Ed Kay, Chief, Sparta Fire Department
Joe Mintz, Fire Operations Superintendent, State Farm Insurance
Dennis Mulder, Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System Director
Randy Safer Director, Codes Enforcement
Meredith Sullivan, Legislative Coordinator, TDCI
Scott Sumner, Asst. Fire Marshal, Collierville
Dana Turner, Public information officer, Fire Prevention
Emmett Turner, Asst. Commissioner, Fire Prevention
Rep. Mike Turner, Nashville Firefighter
Joe Vanhooser, Asst. Director, Manufactured Housing
Paula Wade, Communications Director, TDCI
Scott White, Deputy Commissioner, TDCI